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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: VP SANTOS SEEKS ADVICE ON EXPLAINING JUSTICE AND
PEACE LAW TO PUBLIC

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary: On July 13, Vice President Francisco Santos sought Ambassador's advice on how to gain support for the Justice and Peace Law while not jeopardizing final AUC demobilizations. The Ambassador urged the GOC to show its seriousness, firmness, and procedural organization immediately. He made several suggestions: (1) publicize a coherent, concise description of the law; (2) decide and then describe in detail implementation procedures, on an accelerated basis; (3) demonstrate firmness by punishing a notorious AUC criminal such as Don Berna or closing down the concentration zone at Santa Fe de Ralito and jailing AUC commanders; and (4) name a politically influential High Commissioner for Demobilization to implement the process objectively. Santos said he would raise the issues with the President, the Ministry of Interior and Justice, Peace Commissioner, and others. End Summary.

2. (C) Vice President Santos requested a meeting with the Ambassador to discuss the Justice and Peace Law's implementation. He sought the Ambassador's advice about how to address local and international doubt about the law while not jeopardizing the AUC peace process. He reiterated the message President Uribe gave in Spain inviting the international community to monitor the law's implementation, but noted Peace Commissioner Restrepo's concerns that applying the tougher aspects of the law too soon would lead the remaining AUC blocs to abandon the process (septel). Santos emphasized that the government would not let paramilitaries guilty of major crimes go free, but that its first priority was to disarm and identify them and then apply justice.

3. (C) The Ambassador underscored that the GOC had to immediately demonstrate it was serious about the process, firm, and organized. He suggested several options:

-- Publicize a coherent, concise explanation of the law addressing international misgivings.

-- Decide and explain in detail the implementation procedures of demobilization on an accelerated basis.

-- Clearly demonstrate GOC firmness and commitment to justice by making an example of a notorious AUC criminal. Ideally, this would be senior AUC commander Don Berna because he was in clear violation of the cease-fire when he murdered a local government official in May and had committed countless crimes prior to joining the AUC. The Ambassador noted that the public believed, albeit mistakenly, Don Berna was in a luxurious confinement area and would not be punished for his crimes.

-- Another option to demonstrate government control would be to close Ralito and put AUC commanders and others with existing criminal charges in jail and begin processing them under the Justice and Peace Law.

-- Appoint a politically popular and recognizable person, not identified with the government, to manage demobilization and reinsertion objectively and neutrally, leaving Restrepo to the political task of negotiating.

4. (C) Santos agreed to discuss the Ambassador's suggestions with President Uribe, the Minister of Interior and Justice, and the Peace Commissioner immediately. Santos travels to Washington on July 17 with Foreign Minister Barco to explain the law. The Vice President also plans to go to Santa Fe de Ralito to tell AUC leadership its obligations under the law.

WOOD